



STATE OF MARYLAND

## DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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### **\*\*\*Water Contact Advisory\*\*\***

#### ***Blue-green Algae Reported in Potomac River and Mattawoman Creek in Charles and Prince George's Counties***

Baltimore, MD (August 5, 2011) - The Maryland Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), Environment (MDE) and Natural Resources (DNR) advise that concentrations of a blue-green algae, called *Microcystis*, have been reported in the Potomac River south of Mattawoman Creek and in the mouth of Mattawoman Creek where it converges with the Potomac River.

Blooms of blue-green algae are often identified by bright green waters, sometimes with a surface scum that resembles green paint. These blooms may contain a naturally occurring toxin that can cause skin irritation, nausea, and other effects if swallowed or with prolonged contact.

The Health Department advises individuals who are considering water contact activities such as water-skiing, swimming, etc. to avoid these areas and in general take the following precautions if algae blooms are noted:

- Do not swim in areas where a bloom of blue-green algae is evident.
- Do not drink water from an area with the appearance of a blue-green algal bloom.
- If contact is unavoidable, simply wash off with fresh water as soon as possible.
- If any skin irritation persists or any of the above symptoms develop, see a physician or healthcare provider.
- Keep pets and livestock away from bloom areas. If your pet or livestock appears ill and may have been in contact with the bloom, questions should be directed to your veterinarian.

There is no known risk from eating fillets (muscle tissue) of healthy fish caught in bloom-affected waters. However, you should not eat viscera (internal organs) of fish caught in blue-green algae bloom waters as toxins may concentrate within these areas.

A fact sheet on algae blooms is available on the Department of Natural Resources website at: <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/bay/hab/microcystis2.html>

To report a fish kill or a fish health-related event, call the **Bay Health Hotline at (877) 224-7229**, twenty-four hours a day. To report health concerns related to algae blooms, contact the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene toll-free at **1-866-703-3266**.

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